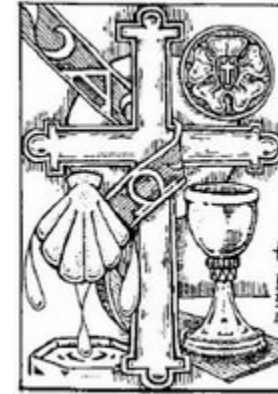


# Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church



## St. Athanasius Lutheran Church

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[www.saint-athanasius.org](http://www.saint-athanasius.org)

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[www.saintathanasiuslutheran.blogspot.com](http://www.saintathanasiuslutheran.blogspot.com)

[www.hopeandhelp-foryou.blogspot.com](http://www.hopeandhelp-foryou.blogspot.com)

[www.thesoberpeasant.blogspot.com](http://www.thesoberpeasant.blogspot.com)

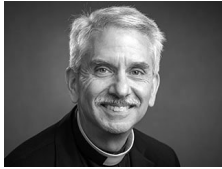


**Epiphany-Lent Newsletter**  
(February/March 2026)

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## From the Pastor . . .

### *What's Normal?*

Lots of bad news has filled the internet and radio and television broadcasts again lately, including scandal within our own church body. People are shocked and saddened. *But should we be?*

The question I hear a lot when these things make the news is, *How could this happen?* The assumption being that good is normal and evil is a strange intrusion into our good world. That's how it was in the Garden at the beginning of creation, but ever since the Fall, the truth is exactly the opposite! Our world is evil and filled with darkness and sin. So when dark and evil things happen, that's normal! That's the baseline for our world. That's what we should expect.

And it's why Jesus came into our world. Jesus didn't come for good people in a good world, but for sinful people in a dark, evil, and fallen world! To rescue and save us. To bring goodness and light. Or as Isaiah said: *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light* (Isaiah 9:2). An evil world crucified Him, but He rose again to shine the light of His forgiveness and love which can never be extinguished. So that for Christians, there might be a new normal in the midst of an old and evil world.

Ash Wednesday is the day we recognize and confess our old normal and that we have lived in it; we are sinners who have sinned. Because of that, *dust we are, and to dust we shall return*. But that's not the end of the story! We then also hear our Lord's Absolution and we feed on His Body and Blood. We are forgiven and raised again to a new life. That in this world where normal is sin and death, there may be the new normal of the light and love of Christ shining in a dark place and showing a better way. Join us on Ash Wednesday. Repent, rejoice, and receive your Saviour who is here *for you*.

His servant and yours,

*Pastor Douthwaite*



## Ash Wednesday Divine Service and Lenten Midweek Prayer Services

On **February 18th** we will begin the Lenten season with a Divine Service for **Ash Wednesday** at 7:30 pm.

After that, our **Lenten Midweek Vespers Services** will be held at the Church **every Wednesday at 7:30 pm**, beginning on February 25th. This year our theme is *Icons of Repentance*. We'll consider various people in the Scriptures, their stories of repentance, and what they teach us about repentance.

February 25th - The Tax Collector: No Excuses

March 4th - David: The Great Cover-up

March 11th - The Lost Son: Love Makes Repentance Possible

March 18th - The Sinful Woman: The Fruit of Repentance

March 25th - Peter: Restoration

Take some extra time this Lenten season to meditate on the Word of God and for prayer. Life always seems so busy, so it is more important than ever to budget some time to stop and receive from our good and gracious God what we need to face the challenges and struggles of this life. Join us!

We'll also have **our simple pre-service Lenten soup suppers**, to help you come and attend our Vespers services. We'll set up the church and get ready for supper from 6:30-6:45, and then supper will be between 6:45-7:15, followed by Vespers at 7:30. So come lend a hand for set-up, enjoy some soup, and then be fed with the Word! Hope to see many of you then!





## The Imposition of Ashes

On Ash Wednesday, we will again offer the imposition of ashes for all who would benefit from this rite of repentance. If this is a new thing for you and you're not sure about it or have questions, we have an explanation and the answers to some frequently asked questions on our website. Simply go to [saint-athanasius.org/Ashes.html](http://saint-athanasius.org/Ashes.html). And if you still have any questions or concerns, please speak with Pastor.



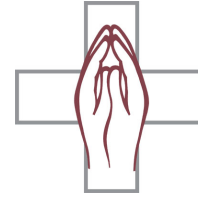
## Private Absolution

Since Lent is a penitential season, Private Absolution will be offered every Sunday during Lent. Pastor will be in the sanctuary from 8:00-8:30, before we begin setting everything up. Come take advantage of this opportunity to hear the forgiveness of God spoken directly to you by name.

## February Is Seminarian Offering Month

We will again be receiving a special offering for our seminary students, Nathaniel and Erik, all through the month of February to help with their Spring quarter expenses. If you would like to contribute, please put your donation into the offering or make an electronic donation *especially marked* or designated for our seminary students.

And please remember - this is a *special* offering above and beyond your regular giving to the church. Don't reduce your regular giving! We need that for our regular expenses. Thanks for your generosity and love, both for our students and for the congregation they will one day be called to serve.



## 40 Days of Mercy

This Lenten season, join us in prayer for 40 groups and organizations that help people at all stages in life and with a variety of needs. Your Commission on Mercy will be distributing this prayer resource for you for use during this Lenten season. The best and most important thing we can do is pray for one another, thanking God for the gift of life and asking for His protection and care. Please join us!

## Walk-Run-Ride for Life



Many in our congregation will again participate in this fund raiser for the Assist Pregnancy Center. **Why not you? Why not your whole family?** It's a lot of fun and for a good cause. The event is not until May, but you can sign-up and begin seeking sponsors now! Go to <https://runsignup.com/Race/VA/Lorton/WRRforLIFE> to register, and make sure to **join our Lutherans for Life Team!** Or, go there to sponsor someone on our team. The folks at Assist have been great partners over the years in supporting the sanctity of life and helping babies, mothers, fathers, and families in need.

## Memento

*Memento* is a brotherhood of men in the LCMS formed to help men be better Christian men, brothers, husbands, and fathers through Scripture, prayer, and discipline. A group of men in our congregation have joined and we invite all the men of the congregation to join us. Go to [memento70.com](http://memento70.com) for more information, or speak to Pastor or one of our Elders



## Congregation Summit/Vision/ Planning Meeting March 20-21

Some 25 years ago, a church named Saint Athanasius Lutheran Church was planted. Since that time, the Lord has blessed us with blessings beyond counting. Hundreds of people have come, spent time with us, and moved on for various reasons. We have both sent and supported missionaries and seminary students. We have been a refuge for the weary, a supporter of missions, and through it all, one thing has remained constant: our Lord and His love and forgiveness.

We are now at an important time in the life of our congregation. The Lord will continue to bless - no doubt! But is He also calling us to new things? Shall we expand our ministry? If so, how? Will we be blessed with our own building? How can we continue to best serve the needs of our members and reach out to others? These are all important questions! And we want to face them head on.

Therefore your Executive Board has put together a **Congregational "summit"** - a time for all of us to get together and give thanks for the past, rejoice in the present, and look to the future. The hope is that by doing so, we establish some direction for the future and set some goals to move toward.

To help us do this, the Executive Board is bringing in a facilitator, Pastor Dan Lepley of Genysys Group. Pastor Lepley is a friend of the congregation, having helped us while he worked for LCEF. He has a lot of experience helping congregations in this way and we look forward to how he will help us.

**PLEASE set aside March 20-21 for this meeting.** We will meet Friday night from 6:30-9:00 pm (dinner will be provided for you), and then Saturday from 8:00 am-4:00 pm. And again, breakfast and lunch will be provided. **We will also have child care for families**, and if distance is a problem, our meeting will be at the Courtyard Marriott in Springfield, so you can stay the night and make it a retreat! We're doing all we can so ALL can attend. **We need YOU and YOUR VOICE! Please plan to come and look to the future with us!**

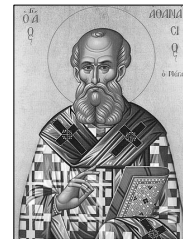


## From Luther . . .

*(Luther writes about the Holy Gospel for the First Sunday in Lent, on the Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness.)*

This history was written for us, both for doctrine and for admonition. First, for doctrine, so that we would know how Christ has served and helped us with His fasting, hunger, temptation, and victory. . . . Second, for admonition, so that, according to this example, we would gladly suffer scarcity and temptation in service to God and for the good of our neighbor, as often as necessity requires it, as Christ has done for us.

[from: "Sermon for Lent 1, Matthew 4:1-11" (1525)  
in *Luther's Work, Volume 76: Church Postil II*, © 2013 CPH, pp. 366-67]



## From St. Athanasius . . .

*(St. Athanasius speak of how Christians should expect the attacks of the devil and his demons and help one another in them.)*

First, therefore, we must know this: that the demons have not been created like what we mean when we call them by that name for God made nothing evil, but even they have been made good. Having fallen, however, from the heavenly wisdom, since then they have been groveling on earth. On the one hand they deceived the Greeks with their displays, while out of envy of us Christians they move all things in their desire to hinder us from entry into the heavens; in order that we should not ascend up thither from whence they fell. Thus there is need of much prayer and of discipline . . . For their villainies and the changes in their plots are many. The blessed Apostle and his followers knew such things when they said, "for we are not ignorant of his devices;" and we, from the temptations we have suffered at their hands, ought to correct one another under them.

[from: "Life of Antony, §22  
in *Nicene and Post-Nicene Father, Vol. 4: Athanasius*, p. 202]



## On the Catechism . . .

During the Lenten season we focus on all that God has done for us and for our salvation. Therefore during this season, a catechism focus on the Creed is appropriate. This year we consider the Second Article:

**[And] I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

*What does this mean?* I believe that Jesus Christ . . . has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death . . .

For when we had been created by God the Father and had received from Him all kinds of good, the devil came and led us into disobedience, sin, death, and all evil [Genesis 3]. So we fell under God's wrath and displeasure . . . There was no counsel, help, or comfort until this only and eternal Son of God—in His immeasurable goodness—had compassion upon our misery and wretchedness. He came from heaven to help us [John 1:9]. So those tyrants and jailers are all expelled now. In their place has come Jesus Christ, Lord of life, righteousness, every blessing, and salvation. He has delivered us poor, lost people from hell's jaws, has won us, has made us free [Romans 8:1–2], and has brought us again into the Father's favor and grace. He has taken us as His own property under His shelter and protection [Psalm 61:3–4] so that He may govern us by His righteousness, wisdom, power, life, and blessedness.

[from *Concordia: The Lutheran Confession (first edition)*,  
The Large Catechism: The Creed, the Second Article, © CPH 2005, p 428 § 31]

## Preparing for the Divine Service

To give you the opportunity to look ahead and prepare for our Divine Service each Sunday, the Office Hymn, Holy Gospel, and Theme of each week for February and March are listed below.

### **Epiphany 4** (February 1):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12 (Jesus teaches the Beatitudes.)

Office Hymn: LSB#842 "Son of God, Eternal Savior"

### **Epiphany 5** (February 8):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20 (Jesus makes us salt and light.)

Office Hymn: LSB#578 "Thy Strong Word"

### **The Transfiguration of Our Lord** (February 15):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 17:1-9 (Jesus' glory is revealed.)

Office Hymn: LSB #413 "O Wondrous Type! O Vision Fair"

### **Lent 1** (February 22):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11 (Jesus is tempted in the wilderness.)

Office Hymn: LSB #656 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

### **Lent 2** (March 1):

Holy Gospel: John 3:1-17 (Jesus teaches the Pharisee Nicodemus.)

Office Hymn: LSB #571 "God Loved the World So That He Gave"

### **Lent 3** (March 8):

Holy Gospel: John 4:5-42 (Jesus meets a woman at a well.)

Office Hymn: LSB #824 "May God Bestow on Us His Grace"

### **Lent 4** (March 15):

Holy Gospel: John 9:1-41 (Jesus heals a man born blind.)

Office Hymn: LSB #708 "Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart"

### **Lent 5** (March 22):

Holy Gospel: John 11:1-53 (Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead.)

Office Hymn: LSB #430 "My Song Is Love Unknown"

### **Palm Sunday/Sunday of the Passion** (March 29):

Holy Gospel: Matthew 26:1 - 27:66 (The Passion acc. to Matthew.)

Office Hymn: LSB #440 "Jesus I Will Ponder Now"

**Note:** The Liturgy for all services of Epiphany and Lent continues to be **Divine Service 3** (p. 184ff).